

REMARKS

Claims 1 – 12 are pending in the application. Applicants amend claims 1 and 7. No new matter is added.

OBJECTION TO CLAIMS

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 2, 4 – 6, 8 and 10 – 12 are objected to as being dependent on rejected base claims 1 and 7, but that each would be allowable if rewritten to include all of the limitations of its associated base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants amend claims 1 and 7, and respectfully submit that amended claims 1 and 7 are allowable for the reasons cited below. Accordingly, Applicants request that this objection be withdrawn.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 3, 7 and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,616,350 to de Boer et al. Applicants amend claims 1 and 7 to clarify the nature of their invention, and respectfully traverse these rejections.

In independent claims 1 and 7, Applicants disclose a switching method and apparatus for a multi-fiber bidirectional line switched ring, the method including the steps of: a) performing a span switch by one node of the ring for eliminating a fault detected by the node, b) changing the span switch into a ring switch when the span switch cannot be normally performed, c) performing the ring switch and d) holding the ring switch request as an internal request of the node when a span switch request received by the one node is higher in priority than the ring switch, the span switch request being generated in another node.

De Boer discloses a method and apparatus for protection switching in a bidirectional switched line ring (see, e.g., abstract of de Boer). The Examiner suggests that de Boer teaches

Applicants' claimed steps a) and b) (see, e.g., column 10, line 14 – column 11, line 16 of de Boer), and further, that Applicants' acknowledge steps a), b) and c) as known in the prior art (see, e.g., page 13, lines 13 – 28 of Applicants' specification). The Examiner further suggests that step d) is taught by de Boer at column 12, lines 7 – 39. Applicants respectfully disagree.

In the event of multiple failures at one node over different working lines of a single link, de Boer teaches consulting a priority table to determine a highest priority working line for the link, and transfers transmission from the highest priority working line of the link to a protection line of the link.

In sharp contrast, Applicants' amended independent claims 1 and 7 recite limitations specifying that, when a span switch request generated in another node and received by the one node is higher in priority than a ring switch currently invoked in the one node, the span switch request of higher priority is made and a ring switch request is held as an internal request of the one node. In this manner, the duration of the ring switch, which is less efficient than the span switch, is further reduced, as compare to the conventional art, to the expected period between receiving higher priority span switch requests generated by other adjacent nodes. When this internal request is again re-examined, it is determined whether the ring switch can be affected by means of a more efficient span switch.

De Boer fails to disclose Applicants' claim limitations requiring that, upon removing the ring switch with the receipt of the higher priority span switch request generated in another node, a local ring switch request is held by the one node for future consideration once the higher priority transmissions have been completed. Rather, de Boer simply indicates that the signals produced by lower priority working lines are squelched, and associated error signals are transmitted around the ring (see, e.g., column 12, lines 58 – 63).

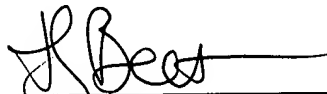
Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 1 and 7 are not anticipated by de Boer, and are therefore in condition for allowance. As claims 2 – 6 and 8 – 12 each depend from one of allowable claims 1 and 7, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 2 – 6 and 8 – 12 are also allowable for at least this reason.

CONCLUSION

An earnest effort has been made to be fully responsive to the Examiner's objections. In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is believed that claims 1 – 12, consisting of independent claims 1 and 7, and the claims dependent therefrom, are in condition for allowance. Passage of this case to allowance is earnestly solicited. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, she is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,



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